

Essex Conservation Commission
Town of Essex
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426

MINUTES

Regular Meeting

March 10, 2011

Call to Order:

The Essex Conservation Commission conducted their regularly scheduled meeting on March 10, 2011 in Room B of the Essex Town Hall. Members in attendance were Acting Chair, Rich Helmecki, Doug Demarest, MaryAnn Pleva, Jeff Lovelace and Goody LeLash. Also in attendance, Stella Beaudoin, Recording Secretary. Kay Tucker and Pam Bernardini were absent.

Mr. Helmecki called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

Review and Approval of the February 10, 2011 Minutes:

The following changes are noted in italics.

Page 4 – “*Pam Bernardini* will be absent.”

Motion made by Doug Demarest to approve the February 2011 Minutes as amended.

Motion seconded by Goody LeLash and passed unanimously

Old Business:

Prioritize projects and expenditures for FY 2010-2011

In past years, Conservation Commission members have put together a list of the priority projects for completion over time. Mr. Helmecki read from a 2007/2008 list of projects and past goals priority projects. Some of the general goals included:

- Develop Essex Conservation Commission logo and post at all entrances of parks Conservation Commission monitors.

Discussion: Members agreed that new signs have been post at all of the parks.

- Standardized signage for all passive parks.

Discussion: This project has been completed.

- Standardize and upgrade trail markers for all parks.

Discussion: This project has been completed.

- Color code maps for the Town's parks and include landmarks and points of interest.

Discussion: Members agreed that the majority of the landmarks and points of interest have been color coded on the trail maps. Mr. Lovelace stated he is waiting for the spring season to look at and walk the new trail. Joe Budrow, Essex Zoning Enforcement Officer will accompany Mr. Lovelace.

- Coordinate with other towns and organizations on all of the above.

Discussion: It was noted that the Conservation Commission has done something with the Land Trust in terms of utilizing the same signage. Ms. LeLash commented on looking into the status of the kiosk completion. Ms. LeLash will email Al Macgregor and request a status update. A kiosk is to be erected at Canfield Meadow Woods in conjunction with the Deep River Land Trust.

- Help initiate activities such as charitable walk events to publicize parks.

Discussion: Mr. Helmecki commented on the New Years day walk. Members decided to continue this tradition.

- Build a cadre of volunteers to help with the physical work on trails.

Discussion: Mr. Helmecki stated that this was a great idea. Ms. LeLash suggested placing an ad in the paper seeking volunteers to clear sections of the trails. Ms. Pleva suggested the Commission schedule a workday where volunteers would join the Commission members in weed whacking and cleaning up the trails.

- Re-establish park boundaries' entrances wherever encroached by neighbors.

Discussion: Mr. Helmecki referenced the survey on which Mr. Carlson is working noting that upon completion the members will be in a better position to follow through on re-establishing the park boundaries' entrances.

- Use town GIS mapping services to verify and establish true park boundaries and various trails especially when they might infringe on private property.

Discussion: Mr. Budrow has indicated that he will take GIS training and complete this project for the Conservation Commission. Ms. Pleva asked if the completed map depicting the open space could be hung in Conference Room B of the Town Hall. Mr. Demarest will bring the updated maps to Staples to be mounted on a corkboard.

Items specific to Viney Hill Brook Park:

- Clear all overgrown trails.

- Use chainsaw to remove severe tripping hazard.
- Put up additional trail markers as necessary including new arrow markers to indicate trail turns.

Discussion: Mr. Helmecki noted that some of those markers disappear and he suspects that people have been ripping them out.

- Revise Viney Hill Brook Park map to include changes in trails, addition to new trail around new pond and the addition of Viney Hill Brook Park and Mud River. Revise trail map on better paper.
- Take steps to eliminate invasive plants where necessary.
- Carefully monitor activities of Clark development adjacent to Viney Hill Brook Park to assure allocation of additional space to passive recreation area.

Discussion: This project has been completed. It was suggested that Joe Budrow, Essex ZEO to determine the status of the proposed Cook subdivision along with Herb Clark's proposed over 55-community proposal.

Items specific to Bushy Hill Park:

- Follow through on redesigning the entrance signs. Rich Helmecki and Kay Tucker did put up a new signs.
- Renovate the main entrance as discussed. A chain has been put across the entrance.

Items specific to Canfield Meadow Woods Preserve:

- Re-establish Eagle Ridge entrance between houses, as previously discussed.

Discussion: It was determined that this is the responsibility of the Essex Land Trust. Ms. Pleva noted that those responsibilities associated with Canfield Meadow Woods preserve belongs to the Conservation Commission.

Beaver Issues:

Members discussed the beaver population in Viney Hill Brook Park. Members noted that the restoration of the beaver area is a work in progress.

Trail Reports:

Viney Hill Brook Park

It was stated that a good deal of chain saw work is needed. Many trees are down due to beaver activity. Members discussed hiring someone to handle the chain saw work. The discussion on the removal of the felled trees was tabled to the April 10, 2011 meeting.

Ms. LeLash stated that she has finished strewing (snow seeding) the wildflower seeds in the wildflower field. Plants may come up in the next year, however it may also take up to a few years for the plants to come up.

Canfield Meadow Woods

Mr. Demarest stated that the new parking area looks good.

Bushy Hill Preserve

Mr. Helmecki had intended to replace the cracked board on the Boy Scout bridge. However, due to the large quantity of snow on the bridge, the area was not accessible. Mr. Helmecki commented on the safety issue of the broken board on that bridge. Mr. Helmecki will purchase additional boards and make another attempt at the repair.

Other

Mr. Demarest indicated that he has heard no further word from Boy Scout, Jake Wlochowski, who met with the Commission earlier in the year to discuss the construction of a footbridge in Viney Hill Brook Park.

It was noted that the beavers have almost plugged the new pipe in Viney Hill Brook Park.

Ms. Pleva stated that someone informed her that the area looks messy and she was asked if the Conservation Commission was going to maintain it. Ms. Pleva indicated that she was under the impression that Sunset Pond is rented from the Paul Foundation and the Town rents it back for \$1.00.

Mr. Helmecki noted that the Park and Recreation Department oversees Sunset Pond.

Mr. Lovelace stated that this issue might be under the purview of the Essex Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission.

New Business:

No new business.

IWWC Report

The March 2011 regularly scheduled meeting of the Essex IWWC was cancelled for the second consecutive month. The IWWC has not conducted a meeting since January 2011.

Correspondence

No correspondence.

Motion made by MaryAnn Pleva to adjourn.

Motion seconded by Goody LeLash and passed unanimously.

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Essex Conservation Commission adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stella C. Beaudoin
Recording Secretary

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Essex Conservation Commission will be conducted on April 14, 2011.